

STAFF SUMMARY SHEET

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SUBJECT

Clearance for Material for Public Release

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SUMMARY

1. PURPOSE. To provide security and policy review on the document at Tab 1 prior to release to the public.

2. BACKGROUND. C2C Allison Egan, C1C Ashley Christ, C1C Tobiah Kroskob, and C1C Jessica Adams have all prepared presentations for Colorado Springs Undergraduate Research Forum (CSURF). The presentations are titled respectively: REALITY OF VIOLENCE AS A PRODUCT OF IRRESPONSIBILITY; WILLIAM FAULKNER, DYSFUNCTIONAL FAMILY, AND THE OLD SOUTH; RAPE OF CHARLOTTE TEMPLE AND VICTIM-BLAMING; AMERICA, LINEARLY CYCLICAL

Circle one: Abstract Tech Report Journal Article Speech Paper Presentation Poster

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☐ CRADA (Cooperative Research and Development Agreement) exists

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Tabs:

1. REALITY OF VIOLENCE AS A PRODUCT OF IRRESPONSIBILITY
2. WILLIAM FAULKNER, DYSFUNCTIONAL FAMILY AND THE OLD SOUTH
3. RAPE OF CHARLOTTE TEMPLE AND VICTIM-BLAMING
4. AMERICA, LINEARLY CYCLICAL

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America, Linearly Cyclical

The founding years of America were filled with contemplation on how best this country could be established. *The Constitution* sought to end the cycle of fortune which takes young republics into corrupt adulthood, a cycle alluded to in Washington's "Farewell Address" which warns against parties and emphasizes the value of morality and religion for our young nation's success. Pausing in the current time, and looking forward into the future, the question emerges as to whether America has remained true on her course. Is America succeeding in her goal to break free of this wheel of fortune, or is she falling and failing like every other civilization in history.

In order to clearly understand where the Founding Fathers based their ideas, it is necessary to understand what they wished to avoid. There is a theory among scholars dating back to Grecian times that in the course of their existence, man and society will naturally rise only to fall (Robinson). "Such a wheel of life symbolized the wandering of the soul from a higher existence to a lower, from a lower to a higher, many times repeated, as on a turning wheel" (Robinson 207). This idea of one soul's journey mirrors the rise and fall of societies. There is a hopeless inevitability to this theory since if man is presently on the top of the wheel; he soon will be going down. Therefore they created America as an experiment to see if this wheel could be broken, and perhaps civilization could follow a positive trajectory from barbarianism through civilization and into Enlightenment, continuing on and up. This was the

goal of the founding fathers, to avoid the regression and corruption so many societies before them had fallen into.

One of the strongest outlines of America's goals, based upon her *Constitution*, is detailed by George Washington in his "Farewell Address" to the nation as he steps down from the presidential office. His first lesson occurs before he even speaks a word. The fact that he is willfully stepping down from a position of power is a unique event in the history of civilizations. The country loves him, he has no opposition, and yet he relinquishes all power. From Washington, America gains a clear message that power should be relinquished.

The first warning Washington gives is the danger parties hold for America. He is clear when he states, "Let me now...warn you in the most solemn manner against the baneful effects of the Spirit of Party...It exists under different shapes in all Governments, more or less stifled, controuled, or repressed; but, in those of the popular form it is seen in its greatest rankness and is truly their worst enemy" (969). Washington makes clear his sentiments in regards to the division of America along party lines. Though he says that some division is inevitable, he asks that this division is at least not popularly and openly embraced.

The alternate dominion of one faction over another, sharpened by the spirit of revenge natural to party dissention, which in different ages and countries has perpetrated the most horrid enormities, is itself frightful despotism. It serves always to distract from the Public Councils and enfeeble the Public administration" (969-970).

According to Washington, if parties are permitted, the government will become less effective and more distracted by party lines. In order to escape the wheel Washington desires for America to simply avoid this segregation completely.

Washington's next large lesson he leaves for his country speaks on the importance of religion and virtue. "Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, Religion and morality are indispensable supports" (971). This higher quality, and the idea that one must always answer to a being above themselves is core for Washington's idea of American success. He questions where a man, and where a country, would be without these higher forms of accountability. "Let it simply be asked where is the security for property, for reputation, for life, if the sense of religious obligation *desert* the oaths" (971). He raises legitimate questions on how an oath can hold the heavy sense of solemn promise it is meant to instill if one does not even believe in the God to whom one is promising. He further cautions that simple personal belief in a god does not work well either. "And let us with caution indulge the supposition, that morality can be maintained without religion. Whatever may be conceded to the influence of refined education on minds of peculiar structure, reason and experience both forbid us to expect that National morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principle" (971). With a personal spirituality, lacking the structure of a religious body, there is not a system to keep a man responsible for his actions other than his own conscience, which is liable to be swayed if it is only he and an intangible idea of a higher being discussing the moral implications of his actions.¹ George Washington is firmly stating his belief that religion and morality need to be ingrained in our country's actions otherwise the America experiment will fall apart.

The last standard Washington sets deals with fiscal policy. He begins this topic, "As a very important source of strength and security, cherish public credit" (972). Though money may seem trite after large discussions on morality, Washington understands the practical problems that arise with money. He delves further into fiscal advice when he says to avoid "the accumulation of debt, not only by shunning occasions of expense, but by vigorous exertions in

¹ For an excellent example of this idea see *Wieland* by Charles Brockden Brown

time of Peace to discharge the Debts which unavoidable wars may have occasioned" (972). Debt will only cause problems for the United States and should therefore be avoided. Washington lastly reminds the country that in order to eliminate debt, our nation must have money. Though a lot of America's grief with England arose from taxation, he reminds Americans that taxes are a natural, necessary part of government. "Towards the payment of debts there must be Revenue; that to have Revenue there must be taxes; that no taxes can be devised which are not more or less inconvenient and unpleasant" (972). Washington gives America the bad news that taxes are a necessary evil to the success of this country. Through his fiscal instruction, reliance on religion and morality, and warning against the evil of parties, Washington establishes three clear criteria for America. He leaves America a firm set of guidelines as an excellent means of assessing the state of this great nation.

Washington established a precedent of serving one's nation and then stepping down. He desires a country where a man will give of himself for his country for a short period of time, and then will leave quietly, allowing others to take his place. In stark contrast to this example is the current reelection incumbency rate. "The probability that an incumbent in the United States House of Representatives is reelected has risen dramatically over the last half-century; it now stands at more than 98%" (Friedman 1). This is not the example Washington set for the United States.

However, Washington was not the only founding father of America. Other fathers such as Benjamin Franklin, John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, and more gave their entire life to America. Therefore, though the power may not be transitioning and trading hands in all parts of government as Washington perhaps would have preferred, the presidency does continue to

follow his example. Though the numbers of reelected incumbents are somewhat disconcerting, they perhaps are not too far removed from the state of affairs in the late 1700s.

The difficulties begin when considering Washington's blatant disapproval of political parties which have become an entrenched aspect of America's election process and political discussion. Jackie Calmes' article explores the current state of affairs in America in relation to President Obama. She questions, "Will he overreach, alienate some Americans and cement the partisan divide he once promised to bridge?" Washington warned that parties would create divisions amongst Americans, and this article mentions the divide easily, as a well-known aspect of government. The resentment that Washington warned would be bred through party affiliations is present. A simple examination of the Calmes' word choice tells as much, "He had staked battle lines...and gave little ground, forcing Republicans to retreat." This is exactly what Washington warned against. The parties "kindle the animosity of one part against another" (Washington 970), causing politicians to make decisions based upon what will benefit their party and defeat the other, only considering America's needs after those of their party are satisfied. There is hope, however, because President Obama in his State of the Union Address recognized this fault. "The American people...don't expect those of us in this chamber to agree on every issue. But they do expect us to put the nation's interests before party. They do expect us to forge reasonable compromise...they know that America moves forward only when we do so together." With acknowledgement of this imperfection, perhaps there is hope that Washington is not being ignored.

However, actions speak louder than words and the events in the Congress are not encouraging. An example of this frustratingly selfish party mindset in action stems from a situation where a medical bill was trying to be passed in Congress. However instead of looking

at the bill itself, and the Americans it hurt or helped, both parties backed away from this compromising bill because it did not fit along party lines.

The debacle on Wednesday was the worst moment yet. The Helping Sick Americans Now Act sounded like a solid middle ground...But these days, those who linger in the middle of the road end up flattened. The White House issued a stern veto threat...which chased away Democratic votes...a conservative political action committee, warned that Republicans who voted in favor of the act would have their scorecards marked down for supporting part of the health care law. (Weisman)

Those who hold office are not even allowed to vote as their conscience and character see fit. Instead they must play this game with their respective party or risk losing their job and any potential to influence America. This is hard to view as anything but a blatant example where the United States has slipped, fulfilling what her Founding Fathers were trying to avoid, and perhaps tipping downward, sliding along the Wheel of Fortune.

George Washington also provided fiscal advice for the United States, advice which America is perhaps trying to follow. Washington did acknowledge the necessity of taxes, despite their unpleasant nature, for the mere fact that the government must have funds. President Obama understands this need, as well as the importance of diminishing our national debt. In relation to the debt America has accrued President Obama says that "Most Americans...understand that we can't just cut our way to prosperity. They know that broad-based economic growth requires a balanced approach to deficit reduction, with spending cuts and revenue." The current president of the United States is trying to follow good economic and Washingtonian principles. The effort is there. With a national debt of approximately 16.8 trillion dollars however, it is difficult to see

how America is following President Washington's advice very well. Or, for that matter, how long has it been that America has been slipping in order to accrue this incredible amount of debt.

The last, and most charged aspect of America's makeup deals with Washington's solicitation to America to keep her morality and her religious devotion intact. The issue is, how does one begin to assess the success or failure of this last criteria? Some would argue that it is simple, look at the past, look at how the founding fathers approached government and religion, and then go from there. In this vein of thought the following quotes are taken regarding government and religion. George Washington states, "The adoption of the Constitution will demonstrate as visibly the finger of Providence as any possible event in the course of human affairs can ever designate it." God, therefore, is in *The Constitution*, he is there with the success of this *Constitution*, and he is missing in its failure. President Washington announces no qualms of presenting this perspective. Benjamin Franklin adds further, "I have so much faith in the general government of the world by Providence that I can hardly conceive a transaction of such momentous importance [as the framing of the Constitution]...should be suffered to pass without being in some degree influenced, guided, and governed by that...beneficent Ruler." Benjamin Franklin, the enlightened man, finds God in this country's founding and, what is more, finds him necessary. Though secular in founding, in order to allow for the freedom of religion this country has founders who thought religion was invaluable to America's success.

However, the country of today's time looks very different from that of the late 1700s. Washington gave his "Farewell Address" to a primarily white, Protestant male population. However, the freedoms America offers have kept our nation growing with new waves of immigrants. Is it fair to keep the intentions of men who lived more than two hundred years ago alive today, therefore running the risk of excluding those who do not naturally fit into this

religiously charged framework. President Obama quotes former President John F. Kennedy that, “the Constitution makes us not rivals for power but partners for progress.” This argues that times change; people change; the structure and framework of America needs to adapt with these changes.

On the other hand forgetting adaptation, an article from *The New York Times* argues that America was never truly religious from the start, therefore making this a falsely created issue. “Faking piety is a value that has always held this country together” (Brooks). However the discussion complicates when Brooks later acknowledges that the fathers did have a sense of morality when they founded this country. “The founders did believe that government should reflect the higher law that all men are created equal. Appeals to natural law are not exactly new. Though given our fallen state, I’d be a little nervous about laws that require human perfection and uniformity” (Brooks). In his last sentence, Brooks touches on the problematic implications of a openly religious government in a country lacking a religiously unified people. The discussion continues into how religion and morality are actually a part of America though, and that they can perhaps remain without excluding anyone. “It’s tricky to balance the need to talk about morality with the need to respect the wide range of beliefs in this country” (Collins). This balance has large implications, dating all the way back to Washington’s concern that oaths would lose their meaning without a strong, core religious belief behind them. This discussion seems to go in circles, much like an American’s attempt to reconcile the intentions of the founding fathers, and the desire to include all people into the patchwork of the American experiment.

Views on America vary widely based upon whose perspective is speaking. Some would say that America has failed the founding fathers in their original intent for this country. Looking at Washington’s points of emphasis it is fairly simple to follow this logic to the same unfortunate

conclusion. Others would say that America is doing just fine based on the argument that a government and a country should change based on changing times. However, to this argument I would counter with the idea that though people and times do change human nature does not. The core of a man, his desires, his failings, and his aspirations follow the same general trend throughout history and throughout cultures. The founding fathers sought to write our country's foundation keeping human nature in mind. With this then the conclusion is that the structure needs no adaptation. In proof Washington's criteria for success, based upon the human condition, have become some of the largest points of concern in America.

Yet, despite some falterings, we have not completely failed. This country is still the land of plenty, the land where no social construct keeps a man from fulfilling his potential. The ideas that formed America still exist, proven through the discussions constantly heard upon this topic in the written world, the media, and scholarly forums. The spirit of the founders is not dead. Simply in the fact that Americans grow heated about this topic can we come to understand that we have not failed. Citizens are concerned for America's well-being, and this in itself is a sign of success. Though America may have some falterings, though it is not following Washington's advice as well as it could be, it is still moving forward. Therefore I suggest that America has not necessarily broken the Wheel of Fortune, but instead attached this cycle to a positive trajectory. America is linear yet cyclical in nature. There are moments of continuing upwards, but there are also lapses. These lapses away from the founding principles bring us closer to following the Wheel of Fortune down into corruption and demise. Yet the mean course of this country is upwards and forwards, with moments of cyclical faltering along the way.

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